



AmeriVoice

SPEAKING OUT FOR SERVICE IN MICHIGAN

Spring 2012 Edition

Global Youth Service Day - Get Involved!

An AmeriCorps member perspective

Corey Saylor

Michigan's Campaign to End Homelessness

National and Michigan Volunteer Week takes place April 16-22, 2012. The week will conclude with Global Youth Service Days (GYSD), April 20-22. I am encouraging everyone to volunteer during this week, especially on GYSD.

National and Michigan Volunteer Week, as well as GYSD projects, provide a unique opportunity for AmeriCorps members from all service backgrounds to engage youth in community service and work side-by-side with community members.

They also give the community a chance to meet local AmeriCorps members and learn about the amazing things members do on a day-to-day basis.

Many of my fellow LeaderCorps members are planning fantastic GYSD projects that will address critical issues in the communities in which they serve. Projects will take place throughout the state and will focus on environmental

stewardship, public safety, health, and supporting veterans and their families. If you're planning a GYSD project, be sure to register your project at www.gysd.org.

Personally, I will be teaming with a fellow LeaderCorps member, two AmeriCorps*State members, and three AmeriCorps*VISTA members to coordinate a project at the homeless shelter where I serve.

We will have broad community participation, including local college students, youth groups, and high school students.

It takes a lot to coordinate a project like this, but I am excited to serve along-side youth from my community and my fellow AmeriCorps members.

I am also excited to see the results of not only my project, but all the projects Michigan's AmeriCorps members are doing.

For those who have not scheduled plans to participate in this year's GYSD, I want to urge you to find an opportunity to get involved with at www.gysd.org.

This is a day when you can truly be the change you wish to see in your community.



Giving Back: Volunteers serve at a local food bank during last year's Global Youth Service Day. Visit www.gysd.org for more information.

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Want Experience?: Take advantage of MCSC's Inclusion Video Contest. More information on page 2.



Spring Gardening: People of all abilities participate in community gardening. More information on page 4.

GLOBAL YOUTH
SERVICE Day

April
20-22
2012

Engaging Michigan's Youth in Service

2012 Inclusion Video Contest

Kathleen Egan

*MCSC Inclusion AmeriCorps*VISTA*

"Inclusion is a sense of belonging: feeling respected, valued for who you are; feeling a level of supportive energy and commitment from others so than you can do your best work." - Miller & Katz

The Michigan Community Service Commission (MCSC) and Michigan's AmeriCorps are committed to encouraging Michigan residents of all backgrounds and abilities to engage in service. To help spread the message, the Michigan's AmeriCorps LeaderCorps members have created the first-ever Inclusion Video Contest!

The process of inclusion engages each individual and makes people feeling valued essential to the success of the organization. Individuals function at full capacity, feel more appreciated, and more included in the organization's mission. We want to find out how your AmeriCorps program promotes, embraces, and incorporates the MCSC mission of inclusion. This could be sharing how your program has made accommodations in day-to-day procedures to ensure everyone can serve, or highlighting an inclusive service project your program has done. Or, if the concept of inclusion is new to you, tell us how you plan to incorporate inclusion into your program culture moving forward.

All video submissions are due May 1, 2012 and will be judged by members of the MCSC Statewide Inclusion Team. The winner will be announced during this year's Michigan's AmeriCorps Week, May 12-19, 2012, and will receive a \$100 Meijer gift card. For more information and the official contest guidelines, visit www.michigan.gov/mcsc.

Green Feet: Fun and Learning Combined

Kathy Allen

Superior AmeriCorps

As part of the Superior AmeriCorps program in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, I work with young children to nurture their development and enhance their school readiness. There is a four year-old girl in one of the preschool classes who has been particularly difficult to reach. Her automatic response to everything is "NO!" She only likes to do what she wants, has been identified as special needs, and has a slightly difficult time talking. When I help out in class, she likes to show me

what she is playing with and will even tell me to play with her.

One day, we were making prints of the children's hands and feet by painting them different colors. She did not want to participate at all. When asked, she laid herself on the ground and screamed, "NO!" I continued with the project and was helping children wash the paint off their feet when she decided to come sit by me.

"So do you want to have green feet too?" I asked. She replied with her normal response of, "NO!" After sitting with me and talking for a little while, she said, "I bet Grayson's feet are green."

Excited she was finally showing some interest in what the other

kids were doing, I asked her again, "Do you want to paint your feet?"

She started to take off her shoes, and then said, "Can mine be green?"

I smiled, knowing this was a significant milestone for her. This was the first time she had participated in any of the sensory projects this year. After she made her prints and I helped her put her shoes on she said, "Can you do it?" I said "I don't think my feet would fit on the paper!"

Empowering Homeowners and Inspiring Hope

Unique mission of AmeriCorps program helps homeowners cope in struggling economic times

Natalie Ciampichini

Michigan Foreclosure Prevention Corps

When people ask me what my role is as an AmeriCorps member with the Michigan Foreclosure Prevention Corps, I tell them I offer hope and knowledge to struggling homeowners. Yes, it sounds a bit sentimental, but it is also true. At Macomb County Michigan State University Extension, I don't focus as much on generating volunteers or doing a lot of outreach, but I do support our foreclosure counselors so their services can be as efficient as possible.

In 2011, just seven percent of our clients were foreclosed on, while almost 25 percent were able to keep their homes. I prepare homeowners before they begin to work with our counselors. This involves a lot of phone calls and even more paperwork. For many callers, I am the first human voice they hear after making count-

less phone calls for help. Some are ecstatic to hear an actual person on the other end. I don't play therapist, but just listening for a minute or two can do a lot of good.

When a homeowner first contacts our office they feel frustrated, discouraged, angry, depressed, scared, or possibly all of these at once. Many have had their unemployment benefits run out, lost a family member due to death or divorce, or experienced serious medical issues that caused them to

become delinquent on their mortgage. Last year, our agency educated over 500 residents, more than 400 of whom moved on to work one-on-one with a housing counselor.

Eve n

if someone's housing situation lies beyond the area of our counselors, at least I can direct them to other organizations that may be able to provide assistance. I believe that knowledge is empowering and I know the knowledge I have to offer can help people help themselves.



Working Together: Team from Michigan Foreclosure Corps serves outside to canvas an area for needs.



Making Learning Fun: Children at BHK Learning Center read a book.

Since that project, she has been more engaged during group activities. It has been a slow process, but she is starting to embrace the learning activities. It is amazing to be able to positively impact the lives of children in a way that will help them be more successful in the future!

Finding a Reason to Celebrate

Leon Artis

Next Step Reintegration

This past December, AmeriCorps members from the Next Step Reintegration AmeriCorps program partnered with The ARC Detroit to assist with their annual holiday dinner celebration. The ARC Detroit is an organization that serves individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The dinner was filled with wonderful music, delicious food, and a joyous holiday spirit.

Those who attended the dinner were very grateful and enjoyed their special evening. I and my fellow Corps members received smiles

of joy, hugs, handshakes, and words of thanks for the service we provided throughout the evening. We left the event with numerous stories to share about the wonderful people we met and the lives that were touched.

A very meaningful and distinct memory I have of the night was when an older woman in a wheelchair smiled and thanked me and another team member. She then asked if she could have some hugs and take a few pictures with us, which we joyfully agreed to. This warmed her heart and ours as she kept a bright smile on her face for the rest of the night. Knowing we made such an impact on her night was an amazing feeling. Being a part of this celebration made it an evening my team and the participants will not soon forget.



Spreading the Joy: Community members participate in a holiday dinner, making for a very memorable experience for all.

Raising Awareness: Bullying Seen Every Day by Students

Children around the world are being bullied every day / But that's not cool; that makes their sky turn to gray./ be nice. That shirt does not lie / You can be nice if you're a girl OR a guy...

Catherine Lanting

Cherry Street Health Services

Matt raps the last verse to a resounding standing ovation; cheers and applause from his 300 classmates, all 8th graders at Grandville Middle School, reverberate through the auditorium. He is hugged and high-fived by his back-up singers and other students on stage who have just finished acting in an anti-bullying skit of their own design and direction. This 14 year-old student, who has struggled with a tic disorder all of his life, flawlessly preformed the rap he wrote just minutes before, after his group was asked to create and perform a skit, interpretive dance, or rap that spoke out about bullying.

The prompt was given to groups of students during an assembly facilitated by the be nice. troupe, members of a campaign created by the Mental Health Foundation (MHF) of West Michigan. The be nice. troupe members have thrown themselves headfirst into the fight to decrease bullying and to promote the simple message of being nice through acts of civility, politeness, respect, and courtesy. This year, AmeriCorps members from Cher-

ry Street Health Services have worked with MHF to revive and fine tune this campaign.

The new and budding be nice. campaign works to promote awareness of bullying and its devastating effects in schools, businesses, and the community. It strives to empower the student body to exemplify the principle of be nice. in that everyone has ownership of their own behavior and a civil responsibility to encourage, support, and include others.

With the knowledge that awareness can prevent devastating effects of bullying, such as depression and suicide, the MHF and Cherry Street AmeriCorps members have visited many area schools and developed a program that follows the be nice. objectives. The one to two hour school-wide assemblies excite students about the be nice. mission and help student groups to tailor an anti-bullying program (sometimes in the form of a spirit week following the assembly) for each

school by pinpointing what type of bullying happens most frequently at the school, finding positive ways it can be stopped, and how bystanders, faculty/staff and other adults can do their part to end bullying.

Matt, rap artist extraordinaire, was given the opportunity during his school's assembly to showcase his creativity and talent. His 300 classmates were given an opportunity,

as well, to exemplify the be nice. message by supporting the unlikely performer, and to come together in a united front against bullying. The statistics about bullying and the facilitators' testimonials might not stick in the students'

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minds until graduation, but they are likely to remember the morning's be nice. message simply due to the feelings of self-confidence and empowerment that all the student performances brought to the group, as well as seeing the beam on their classmate's face after being supported so positively by his peers.

AmeriCorps Alum Recognized for Lasting Commitment to Service

Executive Director of Child Abuse Council of Muskegon County keeps spirit of service alive, honored for efforts

AmeriCorps Alum Spotlight

Kris Collee

Since the inception of AmeriCorps in 1994, more than 22,000 Michigan residents have given a year of their lives to service through Michigan's AmeriCorps. To recognize the important impact these members make during their term of service and beyond, the Michigan Community Service Commission (MCSC) created an award to recognize extraordinary past AmeriCorps members who have continued to fight community challenges following their term of service. The Outstanding AmeriCorps Alum Award, to be given for the first time in 2012, will honor a Michigan's AmeriCorps alumnus who embodies the spirit of AmeriCorps and whose commitment to service continues to bring about positive community change.

This year's Outstanding AmeriCorps Alum Award will be presented to Kris Collee of Muskegon. Kris, a volunteer since the age of 15,

Kris' continuous dedication to service and steadfast devotion to improving the lives of others shows her true dedication to the AmeriCorps motto of "Getting Things Done."

truly exemplifies both the spirit of AmeriCorps and the commitment to making a difference in her community. As a Youth Volunteer Corps member during high school, she often spent her time engaging youth in school- and community-based service-learning activities. As a result, Kris felt herself being drawn towards a career in education. However, that all changed for Kris when she enlisted as a part-time AmeriCorps member in 1996 with the Youth Volunteer Corps of America. She so enjoyed the experience that she decided to serve a second service term in 1997, this time as a full-time AmeriCorps member.

During and after her service, Kris realized her calling was to enter the social work field and to continue serving youth in this role. Following her service, Kris used her Segal Education Awards to earn a Bachelors of Social Work from Western Michigan University. Once she obtained her degree, Kris was drawn back into the AmeriCorps world again, this time as the Program Director for Muskegon's AmeriCorps: Service Learning Impacting Muskegon Collaborative. There she led a Michigan's AmeriCorps team for five years before leaving to finish her Master's in Public Administration at Grand

Valley State University. Kris is now the Executive Director of the Child Abuse Council of Muskegon County, where she works to prevent and treat child abuse through advocacy, education and community programs.



Kris believes her AmeriCorps service played a pivotal role in her life and continues to impact her professional and personal life. Her time as an AmeriCorps member not only helped her redefine her career goals, but it also helped her achieve those goals by providing financial assistance for college and graduate school. Additionally, her AmeriCorps experience equipped her with a number of

professional skills, including conflict management, organizational skills, network development, and project management. Outside of her professional public service life, Kris has held a number of civic positions, including President of the Greater Muskegon Jaycees in 2008, as well as Press Secretary and Community Vice President of the Michigan Jaycees in 2009 and 2010.

Kris' continuous dedication to service and steadfast devotion to improving the lives of others shows her true dedication to the AmeriCorps motto of "Getting Things Done." For this reason, she will be honored with the 2012 Outstanding AmeriCorps Alum Award, which will be presented to her at the Giving and Volunteering Day Celebration on April 18. Congratulations Kris!

Professional Development: Networking

How to get what you need from the people you know

What is networking?

- It is the art of building alliances.
- It is a two way street.
- It can be formal and informal.

Networking and personal relationships can be an essential aspect of performing most jobs and finding a new job. AmeriCorps members can develop their professional network as they serve and connect with their team members, program staff, and community members. As members think about their service and how it can contribute to achieving their goals, one factor to consider is how to expand their network.

Each group of people listed below plays a different role in some-

one's life as they grow and change as a person. This may include seeking employment opportunities in the future. Connections can grow from relationships with: friends, family, and neighbors; places of worship; clubs, groups, and teams; school connections; employers and co-workers; professionals (doctors, social workers, etc.); and places someone shops and/or eats.

Networking is important because:

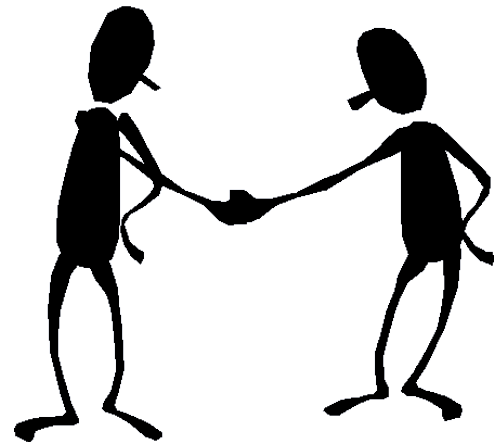
- It is the "NUMBER ONE WAY" way to find a job.
- It is a mechanism for developing a range of supports.

-It can facilitate natural supports on the job.

-It provides opportunities to expand social and community relationships.

-It also opens opportunities to give back.

Learning new or better networking skills may improve someone's performance on the job/service site while also preparing them for the next phase of their life. Check out social



networks for new opportunities. There are always job fairs or organizations that are developed specifically for networking. Check those! Are there ways you can expand your own personal network?

**This article was adapted from the National Service Inclusion Project's October 2011 Inclusion Weekly.*

People of All Abilities Give Back in Lansing Area Garden Program

John Bolan
Power of We Consortium

I have learned many things from serving with the Power of We Consortium AmeriCorps program. One of the most important lessons I learned is from a volunteer named Jacob, who has had to overcome many significant challenges, yet continues to serve his community. Jacob taught me to never underestimate anyone based on our perceptions of what they are or are not capable of doing. Serving alongside and getting to know Jacob has truly been a privilege, and I'm pleased to be able to share part of his story, as told by his mother, Ramona Spencer:

Shortly after Jacob's birth it was clear he was not developing normally. What to do for him was unclear. Doctors did not give me much hope, but being an eternal optimist I looked for the bright side of things.

I remained positive and loved my child no matter what. I learned more about my son from Jacob himself. I have always said he has a Ph.D. in survival. What a wonderful spirit Jacob had as a kid! Against all odds he

Throughout all the hardships Jacob experienced, he still managed to find time to give back to his community.

began to thrive, grow, learn, and survive. His greatest challenge was not being understood.

His sole kidney began to fail at age eight and by age 12 his was in ESRD, (End Stage Renal Disease), which puts him on dialysis and the kidney transplant list. It was a hard road, but not all was dark. After many trials, Jacob received a transplant in February 1997. Once he recovered, he returned to school, finished sixth grade, and went to middle school. While in middle school, he experienced another horrible challenge; his airway collapsed. We learned that he had severe sleep apnea brought

on by weight gain after the kidney transplant. Luckily, we were able to reverse the tracheotomy.

When Jacob was 18, he was in a freak accident while participating in therapeutic horseback riding. The horse got spooked and reared three times, which caused Jacob to fall on the pavement and break his back in three places. It was a devastating blow, but being the trooper he is, he made a fantastic recovery. In 2009, Jacob graduated from Beekman Center. He now attends Trans North, a community men-



Allowing Opportunity: Jacob poses with John Bolan (AmeriCorps member) and his mother at a Power of We event.

tal health support day program. On February 1, 2011, Jacob celebrated 14 years with his gift of life and a wonderful kidney that continues to work beautifully. We are very grateful.

Throughout all the hardships Jacob experienced, he still managed to find time to give back to his community. In 2009 and 2010, we both volunteered at the Giving Tree Farm, a wonderful place that exists to support people with disabilities. Jacob cleaned pots, filled them with dirt, and helped plant many vegetables and flowers. We also headed to the GP Demonstration Garden for weed pulling and compost turning. We have put in countless hours at North Elementary School Garden helping to beautify the 45 tree orchard. Although Jacob has limitations, he is eager to participate and enjoys eating the fresh fruits and vegetables. He is also the official water boy of the Riddle Hoop House Garden.

2011-2012 LeaderCorps Representatives

Leon Artis – Next Step Reintegration AmeriCorps
John Bolan – Power of We Consortium
Natalie Ciampichini – Michigan Foreclosure Prevention Corps
Luke Docherty – Downriver CARES
Dan Drust – Schools of Hope
Kathleen Egan – Michigan Community Service Commission Inclusion*VISTA
Shari Hampton – Detroit LISC*
Liz Hand – Marquette-Alger Regional Educational Service Agency
James Hartrick – Cooking Matters*
Mark Haskin – Faith In Youth Partnership
Ellen Hensel – Camp Fire USA
Stephanie Howells – AmeriCorps Urban Safety Program
Jenn Kern – City Year Detroit
Michael Matthis – Mentor Michigan College Coaching Corps
Alec Marsy – Goodwill Grand Rapids AmeriCorps Partnership

Khoa Nguyen – Together We Prepare
Steve Phillips – Cherry Street Community Health Corps*
Corey Saylor – Michigan Campaign to End Homelessness
Harriet Smith – Huron Pines
Nonie Peterson – Detroit Youth Energy Squad
Andrea Villanueva – Michigan's AmeriCorps Alum
Rachael Wilber – Superior AmeriCorps
Rachel Wenzlick – Saginaw Substance Abuse Prevention Partnership

*indicates National Direct program

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